

# collision



EXHIBITION NOTES | NUMBER 37 | FALL 2010

NOVEMBER 12, 2010 – JUNE 19, 2011

MUSEUM OF ART

RHODE ISLAND SCHOOL OF DESIGN



# introduction judith tannenbaum

RICHARD BROWN BAKER CURATOR OF CONTEMPORARY ART

*Collision* is an experiment in exhibition-making. It began when painter Jackie Saccoccio invited a group of artists (seventeen, including herself) to contribute works of their own choosing to a show in which paintings, sculptures, photographs, drawings, prints, videos, and various hybrid forms would literally collide: butting up against each other, overlapping, and even altering one another in an improvisatory fashion. Depending on their placement in the gallery as determined by the individual artists, the works could become entirely subsumed in the larger communal cacophony.

Most often group exhibitions in museums are conceived and organized by a curator, who selects the works of art and decides how they will be displayed in the gallery space. If the exhibition includes living artists, the curator consults with them about requirements for presenting their individual work, but the overall installation is determined by the curator. In the case of *Collision*, the RISD Museum took a leap of faith, giving up a significant amount of its normal control, as the exhibition became a collaborative effort among Saccoccio, the participating artists, and the RISD Museum's staff. Several artists added another layer of collaboration by inviting still more artists to assist them in making their works for the show.

**Letting go of control is not always easy. *Collision* is a good exercise in going with whatever happens, the end result being like a conversation with a group of people in a noisy place. Some things are heard, some things get lost — and either is okay. [LUCKY DEBELLEVUE]**

The RISD Museum has a tradition of inviting artists to “guest curate” exhibitions going back to Andy Warhol's legendary *Raid the Icebox I*, in which the artist made a wonderfully quirky selection and installation of objects from the Museum's storage vaults in 1969. More recent examples of artists creating exhibitions here by juxtaposing their own work with objects from storage include Jim Isermann's *Logic Rules* (2000), Betty Woodman's *Il Giardino dipinto* (2005), and Carl Ostendarp's *Pulled Up* (2009), while projects by David Wayne McGee and Alexis Rockman featured their own paintings placed within the context of the Museum's permanent



*Blue Balls*, installation view, Art Production Fund LAB, New York, 2008  
PHOTO BY DOUG WADA

collection galleries. *Collision*, however, represents the first time an artist has invited other artists to participate in creating a group exhibition at the Museum.

The contributing artists represent a range of generations as well as varied aesthetic interests and disciplines. Some know each other well while others met for the first time during the making of *Blue Balls*, a precursor to *Collision* that Saccoccio organized in New York in 2008. *Collision* also reveals the rich cross-fertilization that occurs between the school and the museum at RISD. Six of the artists in the show are RISD alumni, including Saccoccio, who has also taught here part time, and RISD students assisted Saccoccio and the Museum crew during the installation. Nicole Cherubini made her pieces for the show during a visiting artist gig in the Ceramics Department this fall, and Kevin Zucker, a professor in the Painting Department, invited a group of graduate students to add their own marks to two of his works in the exhibition. The public was able to observe the progress of the installation, and in some cases the very realization of the works directly on gallery walls or floor. The cumulative process of the three-week installation period is documented by time-lapse photography shown in the exhibition space throughout its duration.

We are exceedingly grateful to Saccoccio for the expansiveness and ambition of her vision — and for her considerable organizational ability. Whether functioning as artist, curator, or something else that doesn't have a name, in *Collision* Saccoccio provides us the opportunity to experience an overload of works by an exciting group of artists who have come together to create something that is more than the sum of its individual parts.



The true interdisciplinary nature of the show is unique; boundaries were broken down as things spilled and tumbled over one another. It was much like the Baroque era, in which the architecture oozed into and onto sculpture and mutated into painting, floors, and ceilings. [CARL D'ALVIA] *Collision* exaggerates a concern of my own practice, which is to work between open and closed systems for arriving at both material form and thought. It forces me to more consciously look both ahead and behind. [FRANKLIN EVANS] I leave open-ended possibilities in hopes that someone else will come in and add to, complete, or complicate my fragment. It's like a game of *Mad Libs*. [JEFFREY GIBSON] There is something about *Collision* that feels very connected to this moment as a citizen on the planet. We all depend upon breathing the same thin layer of atmosphere, and each person's gesture or action contributes constantly to creating a new atmosphere. [SUSAN JENNINGS] Yesterday I lay on the studio floor on a lovely warm chunk of polystyrene watching Wong Kar Wei's *Fallen Angels* on my laptop, and all the while it was growing dark and I lay on the floor dozing a little. Now and then I heard a telephone ring.... The mood of the film was very close to how I might observe myself from the outside, lying here, alone and with this sprawling city all around me. [MICHEL MAJERUS\*] The structure of this show pushed me out of my comfort zone. My tendency is to micro-control the context. However, I really respond to the interdependent aspect of *Collision* and how it values the "whole" without sublimating each individual contribution. [LAURA STEIN] The spatial matrix that I created for Jackie's wall drawing extends the logic of the existing attributes of the space with the aim of offering a conceptual platform for differences—framing the many artists' sensibilities within that matrix. [NADER TEHRANI] The control I exercise in selecting the artists and providing thematic and visual frameworks for them to add to is intended to mark and mirror the balance of agency to instrumentalization generally at work in the production, distribution, and reception of art. [KEVIN ZUCKER]

\*E-mail to Heike Föll, 10.4.01. Translated by Michael Hulse; in Joachim Jäger, ed., *Michel Majerus: Los Angeles* (Cologne: Walther König, 2004), back cover.



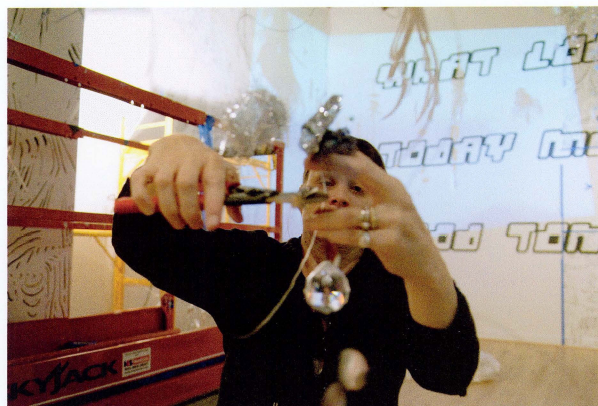
## the visible is merely a portion of the creative act jackie saccoccio

Taking its cue from indie music and film, *Collision* invited seventeen visual artists to self-curate and self-install their work in the RISD Museum. Within this DIY framework, the exhibition functions like an improvisatory piece of music. Rather than one curatorial force creating neat relationships between works, artists make their own associations in situ as they pair, add to, or cover the walls, floor, and works of others. In addition to being self-directed and collaborative, the exhibition extends the studio process into public view over its three-week installation period. A looped stop-frame video of the installation process accompanies the exhibition, reminding the viewer that the visible is merely a portion of the creative act.

**Context is everything; when one art piece is placed adjacent to another it completely changes the meaning of both. [MARILYN MINTER]**

*Collision* is a reinvention of *Blue Balls*, the 2008 inaugural exhibition at Art Production Fund's LAB in New York, which featured the same group of artists (minus two). For both exhibitions, each artist received an identical set of informal guidelines that began with a description of the gallery space and an invitation to consider the space as the exhibition's first participant. Each artist was given a few days to come to the gallery and install. Those scheduled early in the installation period had the advantage of more space to choose from, but they also had to be willing to have their works covered or destroyed by succeeding artists. Artists were given the choice to make their work directly in the gallery or to choose a preexisting piece with the space in mind. For *Collision*, artists who couldn't travel to the RISD Museum to install their work in person guided their works' placement virtually, through Skype and in response to digital photos.

Space predictably had an effect on the works selected and made and on the shows' overall impressions. For *Blue Balls*, a seductive layout (the show was viewable only through a glass façade) inspired themes of desire and denial. Installed over a five-week period, the "finished" exhibition lasted only a few days. For *Collision*, the Lower Farago Gallery and its surrounds suggested themes to build upon. Situated at the Benefit Street entrance, the gallery functions as a transitional area from exterior to interior, with a short flight



*Collision*, installation views, RISD Museum of Art, 2010  
PHOTOS BY MICHAEL MERGEN (TOP, MIDDLE) AND JACKIE SACCOCCIO (BOTTOM)

of slate stairs inside echoing another set of stairs that leads to a grassy area outside, separated by a steel-and-glass façade. The space is rife with multiple vantage points, means of entry and egress, and reflective surfaces.

The viewer's introduction to *Collision* occurs before entering the museum. Laura Stein's *Collision + + x +*, 2010—a totemic sign emblazoning the exhibition title and artists'



names in shimmering layers of type across the museum's exterior—reflects the raucous conceptual and physical nature of the works to come. Inside, the installation plays out as impromptu performance, relying on the integrity and strength of each individual artist while at the same time foregrounding relativism. Michel Majerus's wall painting *What Looks Good Today May Not Look Good Tomorrow*, 1999, provides something of an anchor, but the sheer number and variety of images and textures swarm the viewer as a collective unit even as shards of decipherable notations parse out individual works.

*Collision* is a visual feast, and excess is in fact the focus of several artists' works. Marilyn Minter willfully brings the over-sexualized nature of commercial advertising to the level of the grotesque in the video *Green Pink Caviar*, 2009. Doug Wada's *Better Than Honor*, 2008, is a hyper-realized temporal investigation of autumn conveyed through reflections on plastic trash bags. Christopher Wool's stark photographs of detritus shot in Marfa, Texas, combine forces with Joyce Pensato's signature drips, the residue of her muscular paintings. Erica Royer's dense abstractions echo the overabundance while Kevin Zucker invites RISD MFA painting candidates to pile on their own excess to his painting structures.

**I was surprised by the unfolding of meaning in both my own and others' work in the context of the show. The layering of works creates a unique energy—simultaneously measured and spontaneous. [DOUG WADA]**

*Collision*'s artists frequently undermine the historical conventions of their craft in order to catapult it forward. Caroline Achaintre's tufted wool *Visor*, 2007, is hooked rug-making as extreme sport. In her mesmerizing glazed-clay sculptures, Nicole Cherubini boldly challenges the categorization of ceramic vessels as solely utilitarian. In his mazelike installation, Carl D'Alvia elevates the pedestal to art object and architecture as his work metastasizes off of walls, multiplies, and finally morphs under a coating of finely crafted bronze "hair" in *Slab*, 2007.

Several artists manipulate peculiarities presented by the architecture to form their contributions to *Collision*. Franklin

Evans's *balconyscreen2010*, 2010, a dazzling chromatic screen of mixed media, tape, and paint, flows from the balcony in an elongated Piranesi-esque downpour. His work creates a scrim through which to view Jeffrey Gibson's wall of lively, graphic, taped, sprayed, and painted canvasses. In *Tight Imprisonment*, 2010, a collaboration between Nader Tehrani and myself, parameters for improvisational inking and hand-cut vinyl strips are based on the exposed ceiling structure. Susan Jennings's dystopic light projection, *Flow(er)*, 2010, presents a kinetic surge amid anything that might be called static. Lucky DeBellevue's *Untitled*, 2005, a collection of ephemeral chenille stems, refracts light and casts shadows back into the mass of works across the wall.

Taken as a whole, the works in *Collision* recall Robert Rauschenberg's famous observation that "there is no reason not to consider the world as one gigantic painting." In its excess and experimentation, *Collision* suggests that contemporary artists are revisiting and reinventing the idea of the "gigantic painting" as a way of processing the 21st-century world. The artists I invited to participate all reach beyond the boundaries associated with their materials and imagery, a common quality that I hoped would break down physical limitations, encourage pairings and layering, and evoke a sense of open-endedness. The results were far beyond anything I could have anticipated.

An exhibition of this sort could not be realized on this scale without many hands and minds. Led by the visionary curator Judith Tannenbaum, the institution-wide support at the RISD Museum of Art has been extraordinary. Judith's faith and commitment to this project exemplifies the unexplored possibilities for university museums to flourish in all times as sources of growth, experimentation, and education for their communities. Sincere thanks also to Director Ann Woolsey and the entire behind-the-scenes crew: Michael Mergen, Tara Emsley, Stephen Wing, Laura Ostrander, Michael Owen, Kristin Samuelson, Cathleen Joyce, Matt Bevilacqua, Will Reeves, Jennifer Liese, and Julie Fry. Special thanks to the Estate of Michel Majerus and neuggerreimschneider for their help in having Michel's work be part of this exhibition and to Doreen Remen and Yvonne Force Villareal for their enthusiasm in both stagings of this exhibition. Finally, I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to all the artists for their ongoing camaraderie and willingness to experiment for this exhibition and especially to my husband, Carl D'Alvia.

Edited by Jennifer Liese  
Designed by Julie Fry  
Photography by Erik Gould  
(unless otherwise noted)  
Printed by Reynolds DeWalt  
© 2010 Museum of Art,  
Rhode Island School of Design



















# works in the exhibition

In all dimensions, height precedes width precedes depth.

## CAROLINE ACHAI NTRE

French, b. 1969

*Visor*, 2007

Hand-tufted wool; 60 x 74"

Courtesy of the artist

## NICOLE CHERUBINI

American, b. 1970

*Corner*, 2008

Clay, glaze, crystal ice; 8 x 10 x 8"

*Box, Baby Blue*, 2010

Clay, glaze, MDF, enamel; 54 x 13 x 10"  
(approx., including pedestal)

*Box, Auriula*, 2010

Clay, glaze, MDF, enamel; 60 x 13 x 10"  
(approx., including pedestal)

*Box(es), Medallion*, 2010

Clay, glaze, MDF, enamel; 56 x 16 x 16"  
(approx., including pedestal)

All courtesy of the artist, D'Amelio Terras,  
New York, and Smith-Stewart, New York

## CARL D'ALVIA

American, b. 1965

*Easter Bunny*, 2004

Resin; 18 x 9 x 9"

*It*, 2004

Bronze; 17 x 16 x 17"

*Slab*, 2007

Bronze; 11 x 45 x 22"

*Braid*, 2008

Resin; 8 x 21 x 13"

*Magic Frog*, 2008

Resin; 8 x 10 x 14"

All courtesy of the artist and  
Derek Eller Gallery, New York

Installation elements: white pedestals  
and Plexiglas vitrines; various dimensions

## LUCKY DEBELLEVUE

American, b. 1957

*Untitled*, 2005

Chenille stems, tinsel stems; 98 x 109 x 101"

*Untitled*, 2010

Chenille stems, acrylic on paper; 35 x 12"

*Untitled*, 2010

Chenille stems, acrylic on paper; 40 x 14"

All courtesy of the artist

## FRANKLIN EVANS

American, b. 1967

*balconyscreen* 2010, 2010

Acrylic on tape and wall, standard letter-size  
printed paper; approx. 13' 11" x 8' 11" x 2' 6";  
16' 1" x 9 1/2"

Courtesy of the artist and Sue Scott Gallery, New York

## JEFFREY GIBSON

American, b. 1972

*All Hail the Collective Failure*, 2009

Mannequin, urethane foam, oil, spray paint,  
fake gold chain; 50 x 40 x 48"

*Numb Witness*, 2009

Mannequin, urethane foam, air-dry clay,  
African mask, oil, spray paint; 40 x 28 x 48"

*Sum of Parts*, 2010

*Runaway*, 2010

*Edge*, 2010

*Slippage*, 2010

*Blender*, 2010

*Backward Vision*, 2010

*More Often Than Not*, 2010

*Envelope*, 2010

Acrylic, oil, and spray paint on linen;  
each 21 x 16 1/2"

*Untitled*, 2010

Digitally printed vellum posters; 18 x 24" each;  
overall dimensions variable

All above courtesy of the artist and Samson, Boston

*BetaPlay*, 2010

Acrylic, oil, and spray paint on linen; 21 x 16 1/2"

Collection of Steve Corkin, Boston

*Looped*, 2010

Acrylic, oil, and spray paint on linen; 21 x 16 1/2"

Collection of Evan J. Garza, Hyde Park, MA

## SUSAN JENNINGS

American, b. 1964

*Flow(er)*, 2010

Color video, 29 min.; sound (by SLINK MOSS),  
6:29 min.; mixed-media collages and sculpture:  
crystals, fabric, feathers, adhesive, holographic  
Mylar, bells, tape, wire, glass, sequins, plastic;  
dimensions variable

Courtesy of the artist

## MICHEL MAJERUS

Luxembourgeois, active in Germany,  
1967–2002

*What Looks Good Today Might Not*

*Look Good Tomorrow*, 1999

Enamel on wall; approx. 21 x 34'

Courtesy of Estate of Michel Majerus  
and neugerreimschneider, Berlin

## MARILYN MINTER

American, b. 1948

*Green Pink Caviar*, 2009

Color video, 7:45 min.

Courtesy of the artist and Salon 94, New York

## JOYCE PENSATO AND CHRISTOPHER WOOL

American, b. 1941; American, b. 1955

*Untitled #1–5*, 2010

Enamel on black-and-white inkjet prints;  
5 prints, 8 1/2 x 11" each

Courtesy of the artists, Friedrich Petzel Gallery,  
New York, and Luhring Augustine Gallery, New York

## ERICA ROYER

American, b. 1982

*Untitled*, 2005

Oil, acrylic, and house paint on canvas;  
40 1/2 x 60"

*No Title*, 2005

Oil, acrylic, and house paint on canvas;  
31 1/2 x 52 1/4"

*No Title*, 2007

Tempera and ink on paper; 30 x 44 1/2"

All courtesy of the artist

## JACKIE SACCOCCIO

American, b. 1963

*One to One*, 2010

Oil and mica on linen; three panels:  
108 x 80", 108 x 60", 108 x 40"

Courtesy of the artist and Eleven Rivington, New York

## JACKIE SACCOCCIO AND NADER TEHRANI

American, b. 1963; Iranian, b. 1963

*Tight Imprisonment*, 2010

Vinyl, India ink, and thread; 21' 9" x 42'

Courtesy of the artists

## LAURA STEIN

American, b. 1962

*Collision + + x +*, 2010

Vinyl decal; 100 x 10"

*room with a view*, 2007/10

Rocks and adhesive Mylar; various dimensions

Both courtesy of the artist

## DOUG WADA

American, b. 1964

*Better Than Honor*, 2008

Oil on linen; 35 x 80"

Courtesy of Marlborough Gallery, New York

## KEVIN ZUCKER

American, b. 1976

(featuring first-year RISD painting MFA candidates Hilary  
Doyle, Anthony Giannini, Rachel Klinghoffer, Francisco  
Moreno, Kimo Nelson, Arthur Peña, Michelle Rawlings,  
Astrid Toha, Page Whitmore, and Bruce Wilhelm)

*Collision I*, 2010

Screen print, watercolor, and pencil on canvas  
with additions; 76 x 55"

*Collision II*, 2010

Screen print, watercolor, and pencil on canvas  
with additions; 76 x 55"

Both courtesy of the artist and  
Greenberg Van Doren Gallery, New York

**ALSO ON VIEW** Time-lapse video by Erik Gould  
documenting the exhibition installation